

June 2004

## **Tolland Open Space and Recreation Survey Results**

Prepared by the Environmental Institute at the University of Massachusetts – Amherst

As part of the open space and recreation planning process, the Town of Tolland authorized the Environmental Institute to conduct a survey of residents regarding open space and recreation. The survey was posted on the town's website, delivered to seasonal residents of all private associations in town, and made available at the Black Fly Festival and at the annual town meeting in June. A blank questionnaire, a summary of actual responses and a comparative analysis follow.

### Summary Results

As of June 23rd, 48 responses were received, 24 of which came from year-round residents, 21 from seasonal and 3 unknown. With 183 households, according to the 2000 Census, 48 responses represent approximately 26% of Tolland's households.

Half of the respondents are between the ages of 50 and 65, with about another 23% over 65, and 25% under 50.

#### *Question 1. Important features in Tolland*

The most important items among all respondents included forests, natural resource protection, and wildlife. However, among year-round residents who responded, scenic views and wildlife ranked as the most important, along with forests. Seasonal residents more strongly identified forests and natural resource protection as very important items.

Ninety-two percent of all respondents rated "rural, small town" as "important" or "very important," though seasonal residents tended to identify rural character as more important than did year-round residents.

Both groups indicated that organized recreation such as sports leagues or programs is relatively unimportant. Slightly more than half of all respondents, representing more seasonal than year-round residents, marked organized recreation as "not important."

Year-round residents found municipal recreation land more important than seasonal residents, with 72% indicating that it was at least "important," whereas 45% of seasonal residents marked it "not important."

Overall, there was general consensus that Tolland's small town character, forests, wildlife and other natural resources are important to its residents.

#### *Question 2. Participation in various recreational activities*

Almost all respondents indicated that they hike, walk, or run and swim at least occasionally. Seasonal residents swim more regularly than year-round residents, likely as a result of the location of most second homes on water bodies in town.

Among write-in responses, water-based activities such as fishing and some form of boating appeared several times.

In general, respondents appeared to favor individual-type recreational activities, as opposed to organized team or group activities.

*Questions 3. & 4. Municipal recreational programs and facilities*

A majority of seasonal-resident respondents did not answer these questions, so that the overall response rate was only about 50%.

However, a majority of year-round resident responses indicated that municipal facilities and programs are inadequate for all age groups. Several people wrote in that there are no programs or facilities, and that some are needed.

*Question 5. Support for town actions*

Year-round and seasonal residents uniformly support the pursuit of outside funding for the purchase of open space (96% of all respondents, 81% strongly so).

While there was general support for the purchase of conservation and recreation lands, year-round residents favored recreation lands over conservation lands. This was not the case with seasonal residents. Also, seasonal residents much more strongly supported the purchase of conservation lands than did year-round residents (71% vs. 46%).

Seasonal residents were also much more supportive of revising the town's zoning by-laws; 67% "strongly support" that action, while 33% "support" it. Only 46% of year-round residents "strongly support" and 25% "support" changing the zoning bylaws. Nonetheless, a majority of both groups support zoning by-law revision. The Zoning By-Law Review Committee may want to gauge more specifically what changes residents would like.

None of the actions listed in the survey received a majority of responses indicating that respondents would not support it. This was true for overall, year-round and seasonal residents. Since all of the actions listed involved protecting open space either by municipal or private purchase or through restrictions and regulations, this signifies a general willingness to protect open space.

*Question 6. Resources in need of protection*

Almost a quarter of all respondents listed some aspect of the Town Center, whether the common, library, carriage houses, church or adjacent property, as a resource in need of protection.

Other features listed by several respondents included farmlands or open fields, forest land, water resources, and historic features such as old farmhouses and cemeteries.

*Question 7. Most important issues in Tolland*

Some form of concern over residential development, increases in population and the loss of rural character, resources and habitat constituted the most common response to this question.

Another important issue pointed out by at least seven respondents related to minimal or unequal zoning enforcement and property maintenance issues. Several answers indicated that inoperable vehicles and junk on some properties along Route 57 were of particular concern. This is an issue best addressed by the town through other forums than an open space plan. Nonetheless, the survey highlighted the importance of the issue.

## Town of Tolland Open Space and Recreation Survey

The Tolland Board of Selectmen and the Environmental Institute at the University of Massachusetts are surveying residents to identify community concerns with open space and recreational opportunities. The results of this survey will help the town draft its first Open Space and Recreation Plan. A locally adopted Open Space Plan helps guide decisions regarding natural resources protection and recreation needs. An adopted plan also makes the town eligible for certain grants and funding opportunities.

Because citizen participation is a key component of open space planning, we have revised a previously mailed survey to obtain further responses. Your input is needed to ensure that an adequate Open Space and Recreation Plan is developed and adopted. Please take a few minutes to complete the following form, and return it in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided, *by June 20th*. If you have any questions, please contact Rebecca Augur at 413-545-0930, or via e-mail at [raugur@larp.umass.edu](mailto:raugur@larp.umass.edu). Thank you for your assistance.

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1. How important are the following items to you? (Please check one for each item.)

	Very Important	Important	Not Important
Rural, small town character			
Sense of community			
Scenic views and/or land			
Agricultural lands/pastures			
Forests			
Wildlife			
Natural resources protection (ponds, streams, air, habitat, etc.)			
Farmington River			
Town-owned recreation areas (sports fields, playgrounds, parks, trails, swimming areas, skating areas, etc.)			
State-owned recreation areas			
Privately owned recreation areas			
Water-based recreational activities (boating, fishing, swimming, etc.)			
Hiking, biking, walking trails			
Organized recreational/athletic activities (sports leagues, programs, etc.)			
Cultural/art events			
Other (please specify):			
Other (please specify):			

2. How often do you or members of your household participate in the following activities in or near Tolland? (Please check one for each item.)

	Regularly	Occasionally	Never
Hiking, walking, running			
Swimming			
Biking			
In-line skating/skateboarding			
Skiing/snowboarding			
Ice-skating			
Hunting			
Athletic team activities			
Organized recreational activities (aerobics, yoga, other)			
Other (please specify):			

3. Do current municipal recreational programs and facilities meet the needs of the following groups?  
(Please respond to those that apply.)

Children	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Teenagers	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Adults	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Seniors	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

4. If you answered no above, please specify what needs are unmet. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Would you support the Town taking the following actions to preserve natural resources and promote recreational opportunities? (Please answer for each item.)

	Strongly Support	Support	Do Not Support
Purchase of conservation land			
Purchase of development rights			
Purchase of recreation land			
Pursuit of outside funding/grants for conservation/recreation land acquisition			
Encouraging/supporting community and regional land trusts			
Encouragement of conservation by non-profit organizations			
Encouragement of conservation by state agencies			
Changing zoning regulations to enhance open space protection			
Development of information campaigns about open space and recreation resources			

6. What unprotected natural, historic, and/or cultural resources in Tolland would you like preserved?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

7. What are the most important issues, challenges or threats facing the Town of Tolland?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

8. How old are you? ☐ <18 ☐ 18 - 24 ☐ 25 - 35 ☐ 35 - 50 ☐ 50 - 65 ☐ 65+

9. Are you a year-round resident of Tolland? ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Return your completed form in the stamped and addressed envelope provided.**

Or, mail it to:  
The Environmental Institute  
Blaisdell House, UMASS  
310 Hicks Way  
Amherst, MA 01003-9280

Thank you!

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

### # of Respondents

1. Importance of features	Very Important	Important	Not Important	No Answer
Rural, small town	34	10	1	3
Sense of community	30	13	1	4
Scenic views	40	7	0	1
Agricultural lands	28	14	5	1
Forests	41	6	0	1
Wildlife	38	9	0	1
Natural resource protection	41	5	0	2
Farmington River	26	16	3	3
Municipal recreation land	14	18	14	2
State recreation land	19	20	7	2
Private recreation land	15	14	17	2
Water recreation	28	11	6	3
Land recreation	31	12	4	1
Organized recreation	7	13	25	2
Cultural/arts	14	21	10	2
Other	Elimination of dumps on Rt. 57			
	Need a land trust			
	Protection of land from erosion			
	Keeping traffic down			
	Speed limits			
	New cemetery needs completion			
	ATV Trails			
	No snowmobiles			
	No ATVs			

2. Participation in activities	Regularly	Occasionally	Never	No Answer
Hiking, walking, running	39	8	0	1
Swimming	26	19	2	1
Biking	12	19	16	1
In-line skating	1	4	42	1
Skiing/snowboarding	10	15	22	1
Ice-skating	3	20	22	3
Hunting	8	5	33	2
Athletic teams	5	9	32	2
Organized recreation	7	5	35	1
Other	Snowshoe			
	Fishing (3)			
	Tennis (2)			
	Kayaking			
	Canoeing			
	ATV riding			
	Wildlife appreciation			
	Horses			

3. Adequate municipal programs and facilities?	Yes	No	No Answer
Children	8	18	22
Teenagers	5	20	23
Adults	11	17	20
Seniors	11	15	22

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

<b>4. Unmet needs</b>
Being a senior with grown children, I'm not sure what can be done. Last year's yoga program, while laudable, was not vigorous enough for me. I've studied yoga for years.
Town has very few and very limited recreational programs.
I don't think there is anything for children. Maybe that's OK in a town our size.
Almost no facilities for the young - no ballfield, no playground, no town beach
No areas or facilities available to town residents
No community lands available. Nearest field in Granville. No outdoor activities for any age group.
There are no programs.
Hangout for kids, swimming lessons
Lived here 6 years, never seen or heard of any programs, especially for the teens.
There are no facilities or programs for any group.
No common place for people of all ages to go - even a simple park area, a few benches and swing set/playscape would be nice.
? Only a summer resident
Recreation for seniors and other age groups, meals on wheels, transportation. Help for seniors.
There are no municipal recreational programs & facilities for adults & seniors.
More activities are needed.
There is nothing in town.
We have to go to Southwick for recreation sports for the children.

<b>5. Level of support</b>	<b>Strongly Support</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Do Not Support</b>	<b>No Answer</b>
<b>Purchase of conservation land</b>	27	15	6	0
<b>Purchase of development rights</b>	21	10	15	1
<b>Purchase of recreation land</b>	22	15	10	0
<b>Pursuit of outside funding for land purchases</b>	39	7	1	1
<b>Encouraging community land trusts</b>	28	18	1	0
<b>Encouraging conservation by non-profits</b>	30	11	5	1
<b>Encouraging conservation by state</b>	26	13	6	2
<b>Changing zoning</b>	28	13	7	0
<b>Information campaigns</b>	21	20	4	3

<b>6. Unprotected resources would like preserved</b>
Otis Reservoir
Forest lands and waterways
Marie Whitney property
Old cemeteries
Carriage sheds and hearse house in the center
Farmlands, old open fields
Grasslands and other wildlife habitat
Ridgelines
Forest lands
Center of town
Church, which should have a steeple
Would not like to see Tolland developed with anything commercial or anything like housing subdivisions
Village center and adjoining fields
Older houses and buildings (80+ years)
Views from Route 8 in CT
Open fields
Old country church
Historic agricultural sense of community
OCD Church
Population
Cemeteries
Old foundations of homes, etc.
Maple arches

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

This is one of the few real "country" areas within reasonable distance of population centers - and so is VERY valuable and VERY vulnerable.
Ridge protected from building.
Natural springs
Old farm homesteads
Forest land
Drinking water/wells
All state land and waterways
None
Things are pretty good here now.
School House Road
Cemeteries
Town Common - library building
Land
The old farmsteads; open land
Farmington River
Farmland
Water quality in ponds/lakes
Trout fishery in streams, ponds, lakes
Church and town green
Historical sites
Open space
Church on town green and library
Farmington river corridor
Town green and surrounding areas.
All water resources: lakes, ponds & streams
Ridgelines
Forests
Wetlands
Waterways
Small town.
Undeveloped lands, including wetlands and waterways and the wildlife it supports.
Keep housing development slow
Keep out chain stores, large and small
Cell phone accessibility could be helpful - maybe a receiver on top of town hall?
"Downtown"
Land on the west side of Hartland Rd.

7. Important issues in Tolland
Maintaining rural character
Taking for granted part-time residents who cannot vote - especially on the budget.
Loss of large tracts of property that are broken up into building lots
Loss of wildlife habitat
Loss of identity
Funding for schools
Residential development
Cell tower development
Messy locations on Route 57. Dumps are an eyesore and detract from the community. This is the major issue, who would want to live here, based on coming to Tolland on Rt. 57 - appalling.
Fuel leaking from defunct cars and trucks
Zoning Enforcement
Trying to pay for the big spenders plans for the town.
Tax increases due to state funding dwindling
Revisiting zoning laws
Getting rid of the attorney for the town - he's useless
Requiring clean up of several yards on Rt. 57 - junk everywhere and in plain sight.
Potential residential use of every meadow
Only road frontage buildout, with no interior lots.

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Current zoning discourages backlot development
Large segment of population 2nd homes or retirees
No space available to residents for outside activities.
Trespassers - hunters, atvs, snowmobiles
Funding
Roads are poor
Police are limited
New developments
Old homes not kept up
Lack of planning for town development
Lack of enforcement of existing developmental laws
Development is coming - ready or not! I assume this survey is in recognition of this fact. Wonderful start. You can't stop development- but you can influence it.
Restricting development and space destruction
New housing/poor planning for water runoff
Land erosion
Contamination of springwater (new construction)
Wildlife being pushed out
Over development
Pollution
Low population and tax base.
No motor boats or houseboats on Noyes Pond.
Bears and moose
Over-population
Waste removal - need better system
Motor oil; hazardous waste removal
Too many new people
Overdevelopment
Higher taxes
School budget
Lack of equal enforcement of zoning violations
Unightly property on Rt. 57 & elsewhere
Cronyism
Balancing tax base growth vs. conservation
Residential development
Year round vs. seasonal residents
Town management competency
Elected official term limits
Conflict of interest - town officials
Tax base
Over building
Increase in population
Political inbreeding
Lack of enforcement of zoning and health codes
Properties on Rt. 57 between New Boston and Tolland Center that are covered with garbage, debris and are generally looking horrific!! Owners couldn't care less - but the rest of us do!!
Control development by zoning bylaws
Clean up old cars, etc.
Culture of trash collection!
Inadequate zoning laws regarding junk cars, trash and garbage collection
Lack of zoning law enforcement
Clear cutting of building lots
Bacon strip development
Money.
Dumping, roadside & woodland clutter including municipal wastes (road repair leftovers, culvert pipes, down trees).
Unknown. Perhaps protection of locally owned businesses?
Overdevelopment
Development around wetland area.



## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

8. Age	<25	25-35	35-50	50-65	65+	N/A
	0	3	9	24	11	1

9. Year-round resident?	Yes	No	No Answer
	24	21	3

## COMPARATIVE RESPONSES

**ALL RESPONSES (%)**

1. Importance of features	Very Important	Important	Not Important	No Answer
Rural, small town	71%	21%	2%	6%
Sense of community	63%	27%	2%	8%
Scenic views	83%	15%	0%	2%
Agricultural lands	58%	29%	10%	2%
Forests	85%	13%	0%	2%
Wildlife	79%	19%	0%	2%
Natural resource protection	85%	10%	0%	4%
Farmington River	54%	33%	6%	6%
Municipal recreation land	29%	38%	29%	4%
State recreation land	40%	42%	15%	4%
Private recreation land	31%	29%	35%	4%
Water recreation	58%	23%	13%	6%
Land recreation	65%	25%	8%	2%
Organized recreation	15%	28%	53%	4%
Cultural/arts	30%	45%	21%	4%

**YEAR-ROUND RESIDENTS (%)**

Very Important	Important	Not Important	No Answer
58%	33%	0%	8%
63%	21%	4%	13%
79%	17%	0%	4%
63%	17%	17%	4%
79%	17%	0%	4%
75%	21%	0%	4%
75%	17%	0%	8%
46%	38%	8%	8%
46%	25%	21%	8%
46%	29%	17%	8%
17%	38%	38%	8%
50%	25%	17%	8%
54%	33%	8%	4%
21%	25%	46%	8%
33%	42%	17%	8%

**SEASONAL RESIDENTS (%)**

Very Important	Important	Not Important	No Answer
86%	5%	5%	5%
67%	29%	0%	5%
86%	14%	0%	0%
52%	43%	5%	0%
90%	10%	0%	0%
81%	19%	0%	0%
95%	5%	0%	0%
71%	24%	5%	0%
14%	43%	43%	0%
38%	48%	14%	0%
43%	24%	33%	0%
67%	19%	10%	5%
71%	19%	10%	0%
10%	25%	65%	0%
30%	40%	30%	0%

2. Participation in activities	Regularly	Occasion-ally	Never	No Answer
Hiking, walking, running	81%	17%	0%	2%
Swimming	54%	40%	4%	2%
Biking	25%	40%	33%	2%
In-line skating	2%	8%	88%	2%
Skiing/snowboarding	21%	31%	46%	2%
Ice-skating	6%	42%	46%	6%
Hunting	17%	10%	69%	4%
Athletic teams	10%	19%	67%	4%
Organized recreation	15%	10%	73%	2%

Regularly	Occasion-ally	Never	No Answer
75%	21%	0%	4%
29%	58%	8%	4%
21%	33%	42%	4%
0%	8%	88%	4%
17%	21%	58%	4%
0%	38%	58%	4%
13%	8%	75%	4%
17%	17%	58%	8%
8%	17%	71%	4%

Regularly	Occasion-ally	Never	No Answer
86%	14%	0%	0%
81%	19%	0%	0%
29%	48%	24%	0%
0%	10%	90%	0%
19%	48%	33%	0%
10%	43%	38%	10%
24%	10%	62%	5%
0%	24%	76%	0%
19%	5%	76%	0%

3. Adequate municipal programs and facilities?	Yes	No	No Answer
Children	17%	38%	46%
Teenagers	10%	42%	48%
Adults	23%	35%	42%
Seniors	23%	31%	46%

Yes	No	No Answer
21%	58%	21%
13%	67%	21%
17%	58%	25%
17%	54%	29%

Yes	No	No Answer
14%	14%	71%
10%	14%	76%
29%	10%	62%
24%	10%	67%

## COMPARATIVE RESPONSES

5. Level of support	Strongly Support	Support	Do Not Support	No Answer
Purchase of conservation land	56%	31%	13%	0%
Purchase of development rights	45%	21%	32%	2%
Purchase of recreation land	47%	32%	21%	0%
Pursuit of outside funding for land purchases	81%	15%	2%	2%
Encouraging community land trusts	60%	38%	2%	0%
Encouraging conservation by non-profits	64%	23%	11%	2%
Encouraging conservation by state	55%	28%	13%	4%
Changing zoning	58%	27%	15%	0%
Information campaigns	44%	42%	8%	6%

Strongly Support	Support	Do Not Support	No Answer
46%	38%	17%	0%
30%	30%	35%	4%
48%	43%	9%	0%
83%	13%	4%	0%
43%	52%	4%	0%
48%	26%	22%	4%
39%	30%	22%	9%
46%	25%	29%	0%
42%	42%	13%	4%

Strongly Support	Support	Do Not Support	No Answer
71%	19%	10%	0%
62%	10%	29%	0%
48%	14%	38%	0%
76%	19%	0%	5%
71%	29%	0%	0%
76%	24%	0%	0%
71%	29%	0%	0%
67%	33%	0%	0%
43%	43%	5%	10%